

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/13/2019 03:52 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: City Garden Montessori School (S282E190007)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	30	25
Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students		
1. Significance	15	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	21
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	9
Quality of the Continuation Plan		
1. Continuation Plan	10	10
Sub Total	100	85
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Total	110	85

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY19 Developers - 1: 84.282E

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: City Garden Montessori School (S282E190007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicant

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the eligible applicant for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

The extent to which –

Reader's Score: 25

Sub

1. i. The academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates and, where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates, including in college or career training programs, employment rates, earnings, and other academic outcomes) for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school(s) operated or managed by the applicant have exceeded the average academic achievement results for such students served by other public schools in the State;

Strengths:

Pages 4-8 of the application presents graphs (2014-2018) on language arts and math proficiency, and the attendance and retention/mobility rate for students at City Garden Montessori School (CG) and St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS). The graphs include demographics for black, IEP and free and reduced lunch subgroups. For language arts and math proficiency, for all years and all subgroups, City Garden Montessori outpaced the St. Louis Public Schools. It is noteworthy that the outpacing in some instances was significant, with gaps often 20% points or higher between CG and SLPS. Although the overall scores for CG were higher than SLPS, as noted below, the gaps are more significant.

The attendance rate at CG, particularly for black and free and reduced lunch students, exceeded the attendance rate for students at SLPS.

The retention rates for CG significantly exceeded the rates for students at SLPS.

Weaknesses:

The only comparisons that were presented for language arts and math proficiency, attendance and retention/mobility were for SLPS; additional public schools bordering SLPS would have provided a more complete picture of the actual overall performance at CG in comparison to other public schools in their area of the State. The gaps between the "All" group and "Black [not Hispanic]" were larger than the gaps for the same groups for SLPS, in grades 4-6. As examples, in Language Arts (2018) 58.9% of CG's "All" population scored proficient or advanced, versus the "Black [not Hispanic]" score of 33.3%--a 25.7% gap. In contrast, the gap for the same demographics at SLPS was 5.8%.

In Math (2018) 42.6% of CG's "All" population scored proficient or advanced, versus the "Black [not Hispanic]" score of 18.3%--a 24.3% gap. In contrast, the gap for the same demographics at SLPS was 5.8%. The achievement

Sub

results for students in the comparison school out achieved (when looking at achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students) City Garden students. Therefore, educationally disadvantaged students at City Garden, by having a significant academic gap in comparison to the “All” students, illustrates that the School not only did not exceed, but lagged behind, the comparison school (SLPS).

Reader's Score: 7

- 2. ii. One or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; or have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation;**

Strengths:

No charter schools operated by the applicant have closed or had their charter revoked. To illustrate the strengths of City Garden’s current school, their fund balance at the conclusion of fiscal year 2019 was 14%; the State or Missouri requires a 3% fund balance. Additionally, no issues with student safety or regulatory compliance were noted (p.9).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. iii. One or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management or student safety, or have otherwise experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school’s charter; and**

Strengths:

City Gardens fund balance at the conclusion of fiscal year 2019 was 14%; the State of Missouri requires a 3% fund balance (p.9). There were no issues with student safety or regulatory compliance (p.9).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 4. iv. The schools operated or managed by the applicant demonstrate strong results on measurable outcomes in non-academic areas such as, but not limited to, parent satisfaction, school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and crime prevention and reduction.**

Strengths:

The application (pp. 9-11) presented parent results from various survey questions. Parents who voted strongly agreed or agreed to questions on social-emotional development, school culture and satisfaction. The responses were particularly high regarding the parent’s perception on school culture. Questions and responses regarding climate (culture) and parent and community engagement were included in the Bellwether report (p.11) (p.118).

Weaknesses:

The only survey results that were presented were from parents and staff (starting on page 105); it would be prudent for CG to survey students and the community for their perceptions of the social-emotional development, school culture and overall satisfaction at the School. The application (p.42) talks to the numerous groups that were

Sub

involved with providing input and feedback into the expansion; these groups could provide valuable feedback on City Garden's non-academic goals. Other than survey results, no additional data was presented for successes in non-academic areas. Considering this is a Montessori School, it would be insightful to have feedback on the core components/elements of the Montessori environment.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students

- 1. The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students for the proposed project. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunity for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open, replicate, or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, which include children with disabilities and English learners.**

Strengths:

Throughout the application, as well as in the mission for City Garden, there are references to the importance of prioritizing and "creating a socioeconomically diverse school," while making "Montessori education accessible to families of all backgrounds" (p.14). City Garden stated they would take advantage of HB 604, allowing "an enrollment preference for FRLE families" (p.15). Further, the application stated that the Schools goal is to "increase the percentage of Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible students to 50% or higher by 2023" (p 15). The enrollment for 2018 showed that the free or reduced lunch eligible students is just under 50% (pp. 4-5), making this goal very achievable.

City Garden will identify a "profile of a City Garden Graduate" and include such items as academic preparation, autonomy and independence, intrinsic motivation...", with the key outcomes identified at the end of each developmental program (p. 19). A profile with such elements will be very beneficial to the success of students and should identify gaps and successes as students move through the program/grades.

Weaknesses:

Per the 2018 chart on language arts and math proficiency (pp. 4-5), the gap between the "all" population and the three subgroups (black, IEP and free or reduced lunch) is 20+ percentage points.

On page 50, the application states that through the "Montessori curriculum with Missouri academic standards, carefully measuring the academic progress of students through standardized assessment tools and individualized learning plans for students and taking every necessary measure to meet the educational needs of educationally-disadvantaged students," all students will meet challenging state academic standards. However, no specifics or evidence are presented as to how this will all lead to students meeting the challenging State academic standards, particularly given the gaps that are illustrated in the first section of this review.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

The extent to which --

- i. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specific and measurable; and**
- ii. The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

(i.)

The identified goals are clearly specific (percentage of increase each year) and measurable (percentage expectation). For example, given the academic level where the black population was at in 2018, the incremental progress (5% per year) is realistic for both the ELA and Math achievement (p. 20). The application also identified four objectives in meeting this goal (p. 19), including such items as “documenting” and “implementing” Missouri standards (p. 20).

Overall, the application presented five goals, each with related objectives and outcomes. The goals were very comprehensive and will measure other elements than academic successes (i.e., finances, training of competent/certified teachers).

(ii.)

The five goals address how City Garden will successfully address the needs of the target population. This is accomplished through the variety of goals, in particular, the Montessori Teacher Training Program (p. 24). This goal is crucial in a specialized school and is strengthened by the 60% or more of the trainees that will identify as non-white. This goal aligns with the overall mission of the school to serve their targeted/identified populations. The staff mirroring the student population is a very important factor.

To assist in defining the process, City Garden retained Bellwether Education Partners to provide an extensive “readiness to grow assessment identifying strengths and challenges” (p.17 and Appendix G). Retaining an outside organization to thoroughly vet the process illustrates City Garden’s commitment to a successful expansion.

Weaknesses:

i.)

The chart on page 28 illustrates the enrollment growth that will occur from 2019-20 to 2023-24. Some of the increases are not incremental but jump significantly from one year to the next. For example, for Kindergarten (2019-20 to 2020-21) enrollment jumps from 30 to 90 students in the one year. However, it is not clear as to how the school will sustain a 300% increase in one year, without compromising the culture of the School.

Student enrollment decreases starting in 4th grade and in one case drops from 90 students (2023-24, 3rd to 4th grade) to 25 students. Again, it is unclear as to why enrollment is presented with the significant decrease and how City Garden will address this.

(ii.)

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 21

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

The extent to which –

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. i. The applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability; and

Strengths:

Although City Garden staff does not directly mirror the student population, the School does have correlations (pp. 30-31). For example, 37% of the 2019 staffing was African American; the African American student population for the same year was 41% (e157). The application also presented information, along with relevant goals (p. 26), to attain increased diversity in their staff (p. 30) in future years. For example, an anticipated outcome for Goal #3 is that "60% or more of trainees will identify as African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native".

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

2. ii. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

Extensive information was presented on the key personnel (pp. 31-38), outlining each person's experiences relevant to their positions at the school. The staff qualifications and commitment statements were very compelling. For example, the key personnel bring strong leadership skills coupled with desires to work with educationally disadvantaged students and beliefs that there should be high expectations for all students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the applicant's management plan, the Secretary considers the following factors

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

1. i. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

Sub

Strengths:

This section was comprehensive, with a detailed timeline (pp. 39-42) for each of the five goals presented in the application (pp. 18-29). Each of the key staff will oversee a portion of the expansion. For example, Dr. Nicole Evans will oversee the enrollment of new students (p. 36). This section and the way it was offered was impressive and very well thought out as to the responsibilities for each person and the tasks/progress/milestones for each of the goals, on an annual basis.

Weaknesses:

The goals, objectives and timeline noted in the 'Quality of the Application' section were very strong. However, there was no information as to who will act as an evaluator to ensure that the process identified in the application is adhered to. Having someone from outside the City Garden organization review the goals and attainment towards the goals can add credibility to the expansion.

Reader's Score: **5**

2. ii. **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

Page 42 provides a breakdown of each key staff member and the time that will be allotted to the expansion. This is part of the well-thought out management plan presented in the application. The time allocated is sufficient to meet the proposed objectives

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: **2**

3. **iii. How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

City Garden provided a list of the groups that they solicited information from regarding their expansion (p 42). The School also retained an outside organization, Bellwether Education Partners, to survey various groups; information as to the results of the survey is included in the application in Appendix G. The information garnered, along with analysis of the School's current status, is extremely valuable as City Garden moves forward with the expansion. The information gathered and presented in Appendix G illustrates City Garden's strong commitment to moving the school forward, in retaining a company to guide City Garden through a rigorous strategic planning process, and to give the School intensive guidance as they consider growth (p 17).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: **2**

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Continuation Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the continuation plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.

Strengths:

Page 43 identifies how City Garden will sustain the work after the grant concludes. No personnel costs are included in the budget narrative (e278), costs are for "one time expenses" (p. 43). The budget and narrative around the finances are realistic and sustaining, particularly since no personnel costs are included in the grant budget.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

- a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—
 1. Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;
 2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and
 3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;
- b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and
- c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

No strengths as this priority was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses as this priority was not addressed.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/13/2019 03:52 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: City Garden Montessori School (S282E190007)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	30	23
Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students		
1. Significance	15	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	23
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Quality of the Continuation Plan		
1. Continuation Plan	10	10
Sub Total	100	86
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Total	110	86

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY19 Developers - 1: 84.282E

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: City Garden Montessori School (S282E190007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicant

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the eligible applicant for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

The extent to which –

Reader's Score: 23

Sub

1. i. The academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates and, where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates, including in college or career training programs, employment rates, earnings, and other academic outcomes) for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school(s) operated or managed by the applicant have exceeded the average academic achievement results for such students served by other public schools in the State;

Strengths:

Overall, the school has a consistent history of outperforming local traditional schools in ELA and approximating those same schools in Math, if and when it does not outperform them. (Pages e24-e25). Likewise, City Garden boasts a much higher daily attendance rate (89-97% vs. traditional schools' 80-88%), and a higher cohort retention rate (averaging 96% every year) compared to local traditional schools (52% to 59% annually). The applicant cited the success of its first graduating cohort of 14 students with 12 in 4-year colleges and 2 in vocational education programs.

Weaknesses:

Disaggregated test scores by race/ethnicity for the last 5 years demonstrate a persistent achievement gap between White and African American students ranging from 30 to 50 percentage points in Math and 28 to 52 percentage points in ELA (page e164).

Reader's Score: 5

2. ii. One or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; or have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation;

Strengths:

City Gardens is a single charter school and has not had a charter revoked nor their affiliation terminated or revoked.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. iii. One or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management or student safety, or have otherwise experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter; and

Strengths:

The School's audited financial statements (pages e129 through e150) have demonstrated sound financial management. Likewise, the applicant has no reported issues with student safety or problems with statutory/regulatory compliance that would endanger its charter (page e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

4. iv. The schools operated or managed by the applicant demonstrate strong results on measurable outcomes in non-academic areas such as, but not limited to, parent satisfaction, school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and crime prevention and reduction.

Strengths:

Parent satisfaction (re: climate, student mental health and civic engagement as measured by an external evaluator) is indicated since over 60% of parents respond that they feel their child/children are welcome at the school and that teachers value diversity, equity and inclusion (p. e31). Likewise, 73% of parents felt that teachers had high expectations of their children while 62% felt that the school's staff shared "the same high aspirations" for their child as the parents have (page e267).

Weaknesses:

Though a majority of the parents felt welcomed and recognized the school's appreciation for diversity, it was not an overwhelming majority since 29% of the parents disagreed with the statement that "Teachers and staff have high expectations for my child's behavior and social-emotional development". Likewise, almost half (49%) did not feel that their child was safe at school (page e31 and e265). More concerning is that 46% of the parents who disagreed with the statement "Teachers and staff at City Garden have high expectations for my child's academic development" (page e267).

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students for the proposed project. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunity for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open, replicate, or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, which include children with disabilities and English learners.

Strengths:

The applicant's early student cohorts of 50% Free and Reduced Lunch with 50% non-FRL children demonstrates a conscious efforts to establish a socioeconomically diverse community with outreach to educationally disadvantaged children as a priority. The applicant further demonstrate its commitment to equity in serving historically disadvantaged students by its involvement and support of local efforts to codify new legislation that allows charters to give weighted preference to low-income students in enrollment lotteries (page e35). The applicant's model includes the Least Restrictive Environment for students with IEPs (page e33) and an enrollment of 13%-15% students with disabilities (same as local traditional schools), further indicating its adherence to assisting educationally disadvantaged students. There's a general consensus among teachers that their Special Needs supports are "good" with 80% of the school staff agreeing that "as a school, we definitely support students with disabilities" (Page e230).

Weaknesses:

While expansion may provide enhanced access to quality programming, the significant gaps in achievement as measured in standardized tests between White and African American students suggest more is needed to improve the quality of instruction for traditionally under-served and under-performing populations, and that despite an 11-year existence, the applicant has yet to identify how to eliminate these differences in instruction to remedy the disparate outcomes. In acknowledging the achievement gap "with plans to address", staff/teachers have commented that "low-income kids are still doing better here than elsewhere". These staff comments suggest that staff awareness has not translated into strategies for remedying the issue. Explicit plans in professional development are needed to raise staff sensitivity, understanding and instructional skills for differentiating instruction and inputs as characteristic of programs successful in eliminating achievement gaps.

Reader's Score: **10**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

The extent to which --

- i. **The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specific and measurable; and**
- ii. **The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The goals, objectives and outcomes are measurable and delineated in the narrative (pages e38-e49). As evidenced throughout the narrative, the applicant has thought through the requisite steps for meeting its goals and objectives for expanding the school and its programming.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address the culture changes that will result with the addition of more students and teachers, especially in light of the demographics of its targeted population (e38-e49).

Reader's Score: **23**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

The extent to which –

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. i. The applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability; and

Strengths:

Existing staff demographics indicate a history of purposeful recruitment to ensure diversity in the school (pages e50-51), and the applicant's plans for investing in training for prospective employees who might not otherwise have access further demonstrates their conscious efforts.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

2. ii. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

Descriptions of key personnel and job requirements/responsibilities for both school management and operations clearly indicate highly qualified professionals who are capable of implementing the proposed project successfully (pages e51-e58 in the narrative and pages e77-e91 in the Appendices). The most recent hiring of the Chief Academic Officer suggests the applicant may be able to address academic achievement gaps systematically to meet targeted outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the applicant's management plan, the Secretary considers the following factors

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. i. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

Sub

Strengths:

General roles and responsibilities are well documented (pages e59-e65).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 6

2. ii. **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

The applicant has undertaken a "network" model which enables leadership to devote requisite time for meeting the proposed objectives (page e57-e58)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

3. iii. **How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

The parents and the community are integral partners with the school's leadership, teacher guides and staff as evidenced in their Parent Action Committee, parent representation on the Board of Directors, coalition for Neighborhood Diversity and Housing Justice and the employment of a dedicated staff member (Volunteer and Community Engagement Coordinator (pages e66-e67). Letters of support from a variety of community groups (e.g., non-profit volunteer groups, foundations, university sponsor/authorizing agent) further demonstrate the broad spectrum of perspectives influencing the project's goals, objectives and potential for success.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Continuation Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the continuation plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

Strengths:

The applicant has clearly devoted substantial time, thought and activity to developing a continuation plan that will ensure the school continues long after funding has ended as evidenced in its strategic plan (e153-e222)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2****1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

- a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—
 1. Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;
 2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and
 3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;
- b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and
- c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

Not applicable

Weaknesses:

Not applicable

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: City Garden Montessori School (S282E190007)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Eligible Applicant		
1. Eligible Applicant	30	26
Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students		
1. Significance	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	23
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Quality of the Continuation Plan		
1. Continuation Plan	10	10
Sub Total	100	92
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Total	110	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY19 Developers - 1: 84.282E

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: City Garden Montessori School (S282E190007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Eligible Applicant

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the eligible applicant for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

The extent to which –

Reader's Score: 26

Sub

1. i. The academic achievement results (including annual student performance on statewide assessments and annual student attendance and retention rates and, where applicable and available, student academic growth, high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and persistence rates, including in college or career training programs, employment rates, earnings, and other academic outcomes) for educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter school(s) operated or managed by the applicant have exceeded the average academic achievement results for such students served by other public schools in the State;

Strengths:

Overall results for the school in ELA have exceeded St. Louis district results every year, often significantly. This is true for black and IEP students as well (e25). The school's results also exceed averages for the state in ELA (e160). Overall school results in math have exceeded St. Louis district results in every year, as have results for black, FRL, and IEP students (e27). Taking into account the balance of strengths and weaknesses, the balance lies in the strengths column: there are more areas in which the school is exceeding district and even state results than areas in which they are not.

Weaknesses:

Unfortunately, while results for black and IEP students have exceeded district and (sometimes) state averages, there is still a gap, often a sizable one, between results for all students and results for black and FRL students and students with IEPs (e24-26). In addition, the school's results for math, overall, have historically been at or below the state's average (e160).

Reader's Score: 7

2. ii. One or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have closed; have had a charter revoked due to noncompliance with statutory or regulatory requirements; or have had their affiliation with the applicant revoked or terminated, including through voluntary disaffiliation;

Sub

Strengths:

The school has had no closures or revocations due to statutory noncompliance.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 5

3. iii. One or more charter schools operated or managed by the applicant have had any significant issues in the area of financial or operational management or student safety, or have otherwise experienced significant problems with statutory or regulatory compliance that could lead to revocation of the school's charter; and

Strengths:

The school has had no issues with financial or operational mismanagement or concerns about student safety.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

4. iv. The schools operated or managed by the applicant demonstrate strong results on measurable outcomes in non-academic areas such as, but not limited to, parent satisfaction, school climate, student mental health, civic engagement, and crime prevention and reduction.

Strengths:

Results of parent surveys, cited on pages e31 and e32, indicate that parents believe the school has high expectations for behavior, social-emotional skills, safety, and engagement with the broader community, as well as confidence in the school's safety (e30). In addition, the application cites an external study of the school (CZI) that finds that it is providing students with strong support of their mental health and development of social-emotional skills (e29). Further, the successful implementation of the ABAR program is itself an indicator of an outcome in a non-academic area (e32).

Weaknesses:

The detailed survey summary provided on pages e267 to e273 reflected pockets of dissatisfaction and concern that are worth noting. In particular, parent comments included concerns about teacher turnover and soft expectations of students. In addition, on page e267, scores reflected significant numbers of neutral or dissatisfied parents in the areas of "teachers ... share ... high aspirations for my child" (38% neutral or dissatisfied), "teachers ... have high expectations for my child's academic development" (48% neutral or dissatisfied), and "I believe my child is receiving an excellent education" (39% neutral or dissatisfied).

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students for the proposed project. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunity for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open, replicate, or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively

serve educationally disadvantaged students, which include children with disabilities and English learners.

Strengths:

City Garden has taken several assertive steps already to serve and address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students. As they stated on page e34, they began as a socioeconomically diverse school and have increasingly worked to interrupt patterns of concentrated poverty in St. Louis schools. Their most conspicuous recent step in this regard has been to work with the Missouri Charter Schools Association to allow charter schools to give enrollment preference to FRLE students and will be implementing that preference in the coming year (e35). The plan is less specific about methods to recruit English Learners, but they state on page e34 that they will do so. At present, they have a significant population of black students, nearly half of the overall school population, and have implemented the ABAR program as an element of serving this population well (e32).

Weaknesses:

The two areas of educationally disadvantaged students that City Garden appears to be less innovative and intentional in serving are English learners (e34) and students with learning disabilities (e33). While they point out that their model is an emphatically least-restrictive environment (e33), their population is akin to that of the state overall (e34) and does not feature unique measures other than those that are standard in serving such a population, such as providing services that comply with IDEA regulations, or those that are inherent in their model.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

The extent to which --

- i. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specific and measurable; and**
- ii. The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

Goals are highly detailed, outlined in several sections of the application to describe general objectives (e46 to e50) and the specific timeline (e59 to e62) and personnel responsibilities (e51-e62) for getting them done. The goal of reducing the achievement gap will address the needs of several of the educationally disadvantaged populations -- black, FRL, and IEP -- that the school serves, and their plan addresses specific and measurable goals in each area (e40-e42) and steps that they will take to achieve them (e39-e40).

Increasing teacher retention will be a challenge, but a significant portion of the project will be devoted to that goal, including launching a teacher training program (e44) and intensifying teacher coaching and development (e42).

Weaknesses:

There are several areas in which the school is clearly setting itself "stretch" goals, raising questions about whether these goals will be attainable. For instance, aiming to eliminate the current achievement gap is a significant goal, given the current gap between total school population state assessment results and those of the black, disabled, and FRL students (e24-e26). The plan for reducing that gap is fairly vague, given the level of challenge that reaching the goal will entail. The same is true of the teacher retention goal. It is a stretch to envision the school being able to go from a low of 25% retention to a 95% rate (e43), even with the substantial plans envisioned.

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:

The extent to which –

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. i. The applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability; and

Strengths:

Page e49 describes the diverse team that the school put together to plan their outreach and recruitment of underrepresented groups, as well as steps that they will take to design the training program to meet the needs of working adults and parents, a key step in enabling the training necessary for the unique Montessori training program to attract these groups. In addition, page e50 describes further steps that they will take to reach out to underrepresented groups.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 2

2. ii. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

Strengths:

The team of key personnel is well trained, with strong, relevant training, beginning with Ms. Huck, project director (e51), who has roughly 20 years of experience as an organizational leader and 16 years leading programs for youth (e77). Ms. Mogaji, who has been hired as CAO, has over 14 years of experience leading Montessori schools (e79), and Dr. Evans, the school's principal, has led the school for the last six years, through a period of stability and strong results (e83). In addition, the two other key project personnel, Mr. Blank and Dr. Flores, both have substantial backgrounds and training in the areas that they will manage for the project (e87 and e90).

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the applicant's management plan, the Secretary considers the following factors

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. i. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;**

Strengths:

The application describes the objective of the management plan as being timely and budget conscious (e55), and several facets of the plan attest to this emphasis, particularly the three sections in which it outlines specific task responsibilities of the members of the team and the timelines for their completion (e59-e62) as well as the detailed budget narrative (e278-e293). In addition, the application states that the leadership team has worked to reduce the administrative responsibilities of the school leadership team in order to free up their time for the additional work associated with the project (e56).

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 6

2. ii. **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

The team of key personnel is well constructed to complete the outlined project in the time allocated. One team member, Amira Mogaji, who has over 14 years of experience as a school leader in Montessori settings (e79), has been hired to manage implementation of the key elements of the project, particularly the implementation of the teacher training program (e57), and will spend 50% of her time on the project. In addition, the plans calls for the CEO to devote 30% of her time, the principal to devote 30% of her time, the COO to devote 20% of his time, and the CDO to devote 10% of her time (e62) to tasks designated in the timeline of activities (e59-e61) and the specific roles of the leadership team section of the application (e57-e58).

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 2

3. iii. **How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

The timeline of activities on page e59 outlines a multi-step plan over a five-year period to create parent engagement plans, hold feedback sessions with parents, and use data from parent inputs to inform school culture and climate initiatives. In addition, the "diversity of perspective" section on page e62 states that they have solicited input on the

Sub

project plans from parents, teachers and staff, board members, and community partners and will continue to do so.

Weaknesses:

None.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Continuation Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the continuation plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

Strengths:

Transitioning to a network model (e56) and devoting a full-time veteran in the field of development (e55 and e58) demonstrate the extent to which the school's team has designed a plan that considers continuation planning and commits to self-sustainability. Over the last six years, prior to hiring the CDO, their philanthropic support has gone from \$60,000 to \$860,000, so the school's financial position has a strong prospect for stability. The continuation plan narrative emphasizes that the school has been building organizational capacity with recent grant funds (e62) and that this expansion aims to build toward a self-sustaining model.

Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

- a. **Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—**
 1. **Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;**
 2. **Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and**
 3. **Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;**
- b. **Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and**

c. **Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.**

Strengths:

The application does not address this topic.

Weaknesses:

The application does not address this topic.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

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